

Engaging the Education Community

Tips for building sustainable connections

Why Engage Schools?

- ❖ To build strong relationships with the local schools, you should:
 - Positive recruitment results among youth;
 - Consistently meet their output goals; and
 - Strong connections to their community.
- ❖ Schools are an excellent way to identify the needs of a community, particularly for youth.

Getting Started

- ❖ Identify key stakeholders to contact at the district and campus level.
 - District: Superintendent's office, District Counseling Coordinator,
 - Campus: Principal, Principal's Administrative Assistant, Assistant Principal, School Counselor, Attendance/Truancy office
 - Contact information can typically be found on the district website's directory.
- ❖ Build a rapport at the district level for larger school districts.
 - This can help get buy-in across multiple campuses.
- ❖ Build relationships at the campus level to get your foot in the door for smaller school districts.
- ❖ Identify areas of need within the school that programs could address through the available School Needs Assessment.
 - You can retrieve this information from the district and/or campus website.
 - This is often completed within the school counseling department.
- ❖ Reach Out!
 - Highlight how your program can benefit the needs of the school population without creating additional work for employees.
 - If your work is in an area related to any courses taught at the school, reaching out to that campus administrator and teacher is also a great place to start.

Maintaining Relationships

- ❖ Maintain rapport with teachers, aides, counselors, and other staff.
 - If the staff view you and your work as valuable to the school, they will support your program (and in some instances even advocate for it to the district or school board)
- ❖ Be visible on campus.
 - Being available and interacting with the school community will help your program become part of the school's culture.
- ❖ Be transparent with the school community.
 - Sharing about the work being done on campus helps create trust and buy-in. It also allows you the opportunity to share success stories and get the word out about your programming.

Best Practices

- ❖ If you're able to have a space on campus, this is a great way to be visible and maintain relationships with school personnel.
- ❖ Discuss opportunities to introduce yourself and your work to school staff (staff meetings, start-of-year orientation, etc.)
- ❖ Get approval for any questionnaires, forms, or permission slips that will be distributed to students (particularly if done during school hours.)
- ❖ Always keep the school in the loop on what your program is doing.
 - Keeping all stakeholders up-to-date keeps everyone aligned and eliminates any potential surprises that could impact the working relationship.
- ❖ A principal's administrative assistant is an asset to any campus.
 - Building a strong relationship with the administrative assistant can help keep you in touch with the principal and other staff.

Considerations

- ❖ Remember that schools have their own legal requirements and statutes they must follow. Finding areas where your services can help satisfy these requirements is a great way to find alignment in a working relationship.
- ❖ Many schools are understaffed and/or overworked – any time you can avoid adding work to someone's plate (or even take some off) will be appreciated and remembered.
- ❖ Don't get discouraged if it takes time! Building relationships with a school or district may be a slow process; stay positive and maintain your presence as much as allowed.